

Abstractions, The Way Of Pathei-Mathos, And The Modern World

The *fons et origo* of this essay was an attempt to understand Myatt's rather neglected post-2011 modern philosophy, or way, of pathei-mathos {1} and to explain the essence of that philosophy, with my derived understanding that the essence of his philosophy was the difference between the perception derived from the use of mostly modern manufactured generalized categories, and the perception that Myatt suggests that empathy and a personal knowing, a pathei-mathos, provides where by the term pathei-mathos he means a learning from our own personal often difficult or formative experiences, a learning that a personal knowing of a particular person provides, and the learning from a scholarly personal research via a long-term study of primary sources. {2}

In addition, in Myatt's weltanschauung the question of the understanding, the perception, wrought through the use of generalized categories was also a question of authority; of whether to accept the authority of others, as for example in the fallacy of reasoning described as 'the appeal to authority', {3} or whether to accept what our own empathy and pathei-mathos and research inform us.

Categories

In the philosophy of pathei-mathos categories are described as 'causal abstractions' with Myatt contending that such abstractions, referred to by means of denotata, and thus expressed in words, are the genesis of, in their origin or later, a named opposite which results sooner or later in a dialectic of such perceived opposites. That is, and for example, the denotatum 'good' is the genesis of the denotatum 'evil' and the denotatum 'bad', with the denotatum 'good' and the denotata 'evil' and 'bad' being variously interpreted over the centuries according to which other category, such as Christianity or politics, they are applied.

In his *Reflections On Conflict And Suffering* {4} Myatt goes into some detail, referencing Anaximander and Heraclitus and providing translations of their texts, while in several other essays including *Religion, Empathy, and Pathei-Mathos* {5} his context is the meaning of good and evil in Christianity and in the Quran, both of which meanings he also refers back to the denotatum 'sin' as a translation of the Greek ἀμαρτία.

In regard to ἀμαρτία, in his translation of the Gospel Of John {6} he writes in his Introduction:

"In [chapter] 8.7 and in respect of ἀναμάρτητος I have eschewed the common translation of ἀμαρτία by English word 'sin' and which English word, through centuries of Christian exegesis and preaching, has become a theological abstraction and a pejorative term, whereas the the original meaning of the English word syn imputed the sense of doing what was wrong, of committing an error, of making a mistake, of being at fault; of in some way overstepping the bounds or transgressing limits imposed by others, and thus of accepting responsibility for such an infraction, a sense which the suggested etymology of the word syn implies: from the Latin sons, sontis. While my translation of 'mistake' (in 8.7) and 'error' (in 1.29) may well be controversial, to me it imparts something important regarding the teachings, and the life, of Jesus of Nazareth: something quite human, something rather different from a stern preacher preaching about 'sin'; something which seems to express what the Beatitudes express, and something which individuals such as Julian of Norwich, George Fox and William Penn many centuries later tried to say and write about Christianity and about the teachings and the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus the interpretation of this particular verse is "So, as they continued to ask he straightened himself, saying to them: Let he who has never made a mistake throw the first stone at her." (ii) In 1.10 - ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο - I take the sense of ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν as suggesting not that "he was in the world" but rather that he was "of the world", among - with - those of the world, with his mortal body subject to pain and bodily death, with καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο thus implying not that "the world was made/created through him" but that the world was presenced in him, past, present, and future, with the English word 'presenced' - etymon: Latin praesentia - suggested by how he came to be embodied, presenced, in the Eucharist (qv. the phrase 'This same presence may be called moste fitly, a reall presence, that is a presence not fained, but a true & a faythfull presence,' in John Foxe's *The first volume of the ecclesiasticall history: contaynyng the Actes and monumentes of thynges passed in every kynges tyme in this realme*, 1570)."

Such technical details aside, what Myatt is expressing is that sooner or later such abstractions engender conflict and, as our human history reveals, result in human suffering for those deemed to be on the wrong side of 'good' or who are considered to be 'sinners' and/or 'bad'.

As he noted in *Reflections On Conflict And Suffering* , {4}

"the nature of - the causality inherent in - denotata results in eris [ἔρις], a discord of opposites: for every denotatum has or developes an opposite and thus can cleave physis, as Heraclitus poetically and somewhat enigmatically expressed."

"The meaning of the appellations inherent in causal abstraction can and does change over periods causal time through common usage and through the changes of interpretation (exegesis) wrought through political ideology, social change, and religious dogma and reforms. The interpretation of an appellation, a denotatum, in another language can also vary or distort the original meaning, a classic example being Hellenistic Greek

words, occurring the Corpus Hermeticum, such as λόγος and νοῦς conventionally interpreted as 'word' and 'intellect/mind' neither of which interpretations are satisfactory.

What is important about all this is that empathy and pathei-mathos are directly personal and wordless perceivations and experiences and therefore are not dependant on denotata, on any ἰδέα/εἶδος, and by the nature of empathy and pathei-mathos cannot be extrapolated beyond such a personal experiencing."

Furthermore,

"In the real world, abstractions conceal our connexion to Being and to other living beings so that instead of using wordless empathy and pathei-mathos as a guide to Reality and to living we tend to define ourselves or are defined by others according to an abstraction or according to various abstractions, all of which are defined and/or explained by denotata and thus open to interpretation, involve a dialectic of opposites and all of which lead to or will lead to over durations of causal time to ἔρις, to discord. According to the recounted tales of Greek mythology attributed to Aesop, ἔρις was caused by, or was a consequence of, the marriage between a personified πόλεμος (as the δαίμων of kindred strife) and a personified ὕβρις (as the δαίμων of arrogant pride) with Polemos following Hubris around rather than vice versa, with Eris thus considered the child of Polemos and Hubris." {4}

The Abstraction Of The Nation-State

One category, one abstraction, which Myatt described in many of his post-2011 writings is the entity that is known as the Nation-State which now and for the past century or more has dominated the world and profoundly affected the peoples of the modern world especially in terms of conflicts and wars. Of that abstraction Myatt wrote that it

"not only has a limited life-span but is also subject to change, to revisions, to ameliorations, reformation, and re-interpretation. Thus, in the example of a nation-State, the boundaries may change though war or invasion or conquest, as the peoples within the entity change though emigration and immigration and assimilation, and as the authority or authorities governing or ruling the entity can and do change over decades and centuries sometimes through internal revolution or invasion. A pertinent example being England before and after the Roman conquest, after the arrival of the Vikings and then after the Norman conquest followed centuries later by civil war and culminating in the immigration that occurred after the Second World War and which is continuing." {3}

In his earlier *Religion, Empathy, and Pathei-Mathos* {5} in an illuminating section about ontology, which I shall (without the footnotes) quote in full, he expressed the view that,

"conventional religions - such as Christianity and Islam - begin with a supreme being and a revelation, the promise, of an afterlife following a judgement, by the supreme being, of we humans as individuals. That is, there is guidance given as to what is good and bad and as to one's expected behaviour, as well as individuals who can commit transgressions - who can 'sin' - or who, by following the correct guidance, can progress toward salvation. The ontology here is of a transcendent, immortal, God, or Allah, and of separate mortal beings who possess the potential - for example, an immortal soul - to gain an existence beyond the death of their corporeal body. The immortal being has the ability (the power) to punish, or to reward, the mortal beings, and is stated to be a real being with an existence independent of us.

In respect of The State, the ontology is one of an entity - The State, the nation-State, the government - and of individuals ('citizens') who are less powerful than this entity, with this entity, however named, having the ability (the power) to punish, or to reward, the citizens. There is guidance given, by [the] powerful entity, in the form of laws - of what is bad and good and one's expected behaviour - and the promise of such things as 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness' and reward of, a possible progress toward (in this life), security, health, and (possibly) wealth or at least a reasonable standard of living. Here, the powerful entity is a human ideation, of varied and variable specification, and which specifications have been manufactured - brought into being - by humans at various times during the past three hundred years and more.

In respect of the culture of pathei-mathos, I find within it an alternative to these two influential, but in many ways quite similar, ontologies with their powerful entities, their guidance, their punishments and rewards, and the progression of individuals toward some-thing which the powerful entity asserts or promises it can provide. This alternative is the ontology of us - we human beings - as a transient affective and effective connexion to other living beings, an emanation of the flux of Life, of ψυχή. That is, of the separation-of-otherness - of I and of 'them', the others - being the result of a causal-only perception, and of denotatum: of our propensity to give names to, or to describe by means of terms, that which we observe to be or that which we assume to be is different to and separate from us, whereas, as empathy reveals, 'we' are part of, an aspect, of 'them' since 'they' are also finite, transient, emanations of ψυχή.

There is no abstract 'good' and 'evil' here; no division or cleaving asunder of φύσις (physis). There is only us in harmony, in balance, with our nature, our φύσις, or us not in harmony with our nature as an affecting and effective, finite, transient, mortal, aspect of Life. If we are harmony - in balance with Life, with other life - we do not cause or contribute to or are not the genesis of suffering: we do not affect Life in a harmful way, and as I have intimated elsewhere, love, compassion, humility, empathy, and honour, are a possible means whereby we, in harmony with our φύσις, can avoid harming Life and its emanations, be such life our fellow human beings or the other life with which we share this planet.

In effect, this is the ontology of the illusion of self and of the unity, sans denotatum, of all living beings; of how we - presenced as human beings - can and do affect, and have affected, other life including other humans, often in ways we are not aware of; and of how our perception of I and of 'them' (the separation-of-otherness) has often led to us affecting other life in a harmful way, thus causing or contributing to or being the genesis of suffering, for that other life and often for ourselves. The ontology where there is no distinction, in being, between us - the emanations - and what emanates; there is only the appearance of difference due to our use of a causal-only perception and of denotatum. That is, we are ψυχή as ψυχή is both within us and us. We are the flux, the changing, of Life; changing as it changes."

Such quotations convey something of the essence of his philosophy; which is that avoidance of suffering requires the individual perception of empathy, a personal knowing, a personal discovery through scholarly research, and a personal pathei-mathos. That is, an abandonment of abstractions, of denotata, and of fallacies of reasoning such as the appeal to authority.

The Appearance Of Difference

According to Myatt, all categories, abstractions, present us with an illusion of difference between 'us' and 'them', the others. Which illusion is and has been a cause of suffering for 'the others' since it often includes 'we, the good, the just, the righteous' and they 'the malevolent, the bad, the unjust, evil ones' whom we must oppose often by whatever means that some representative or representatives of some government of some Nation-State, or some spokesperson or preacher for some ideology or religion, demands.

In his philosophy, Myatt presents us with an alternative. This alternative in an individual appreciation, a wordless perceivation or perception, of the numinous which empathy and pathei-mathos reveal. For the essence of his philosophy is that it is a personal and mystical perceivation, derived from his own pathei-mathos, rather than a philosophy as philosophy is understood in academia and elsewhere; that is, it is his personal perceivation of the numinous, of which he wrote:

"The numinous is θειότης, divinity-presenced, as in tractate XI v. 11 of the Corpus Hermeticum, θειότητα μίαν, and as in Plutarch, De Pythiae Oraculis, 407a, 398a-f. The numinous is essentially what is, or what manifests or can manifest or remind us of (what can reveal) that which is felt, experienced, or understood as sacred, numinal, sublime, divine, awe-inspiring, beautiful, and beyond our ability, as mortals, to control or meaningfully express through the medium of words. For Christians, it is considered to be God; for Muslims, Allah; for the Romans, divinitas; for others ancient and modern, it was and is considered to be expressible, or intimated, by mythoi and presenced in ὁ θεός, the deity, and/or by θεοί, the gods." {7}

The type of perceivation that Myatt's somewhat iconoclastic translations, and associated commentaries, suggest was mentioned or hinted at:

(i) in the hermetic Emerald Tablet, also known as Tabula Smaragdina Hermetis,

Veritas ita se habet et non est dubium,
quod inferiora superioribus et superiora inferioribus respondent.
Operator miraculorum unus solus est Deus, a quo descendit omnis operatio mirabilis.
Sic omnes res generantur ab una sola substantia, una sua sola disposicione.
Quarum pater est Sol, quarum mater est Luna.
Que portavit ipsam naturam per auram in utero, terra impregnata est ab ea.
Hinc dicitur Sol causatorum pater, thesaurus miraculorum, largitor virtutum.
Ex igne facta est terra.
Separa terrenum ab igneo, quia subtile dignius est grosso, et rarum spisso.
Hoc fit sapienter et discrete. Ascendit enim de terra in celum, et ruit de celo in terram.
Et inde interficit superiorem et inferiorem virtutem.
Sic ergo dominatur inferioribus et superioribus et tu dominaberis sursum et deorsum,
tecum enim est lux luminum, et propter hoc fugient a te omnes tenebre.
Virtus superior vincit omnia.
Omne enim rarum agit in omne densum.
Et secundum disposicionem majoris mundi currit hec operatio,
et propter hoc vocatur Hermogenes triplex in philosophia.

Veritas is veritas
For the higher is as the lower
With the lower as the higher.
The signs were from The One
As all beings are from The One
Through one design:

The father, the Sun,
The mother, the Moon,
The Pnuema, the womb
The Earth, the nourishment.

Telismata: of the father
Guardian of balanced signs.
Pyros, the Earth
Separating the harsh from the gentle.

With the gentle, noble,
Ascending from Earth to Empyrean
Descending from Empyrean to Earth
Influencing the higher, the lower,
The gentle, the harsh:
The illumination of the illuminated.

Thus, it is for this the Magnum Opus came-into-being
For I am Hermes Trismegistus of The Wisdom. {8}

and (ii) in The Beatitudes,

1 Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ·
2 καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων·
3 Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.
5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.
7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

1 Observing the multitudes, he ascended the hill and, having sat down, his disciples approached him.
2 Then, a revelation, for he instructed those there by saying this:
3 Fortunate, those humble with spiritus, for theirs is the Kingdom of Empyrean.
4 Fortunate, those who grieve, for they shall have solace.
5 Fortunate, the gentle, for they shall acquire the Earth.
6 Fortunate, those who hunger and thirst for fairness, for they shall be replete.
7 Fortunate, the compassionate, for they shall receive compassion.
8 Fortunate, the refined of heart, for they shall perceive Theos.
9 Fortunate, the peaceable, for they shall be called children of Theos.
10 Fortunate, those harassed due to their fairness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Empyrean. {9}

and also (iii) centuries earlier by Anaximander,

ἀρχὴ <...> τῶν ὄντων τὸ ἄπειρον <...>
ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστὶ τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ
δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν

[the] source <...> of beings is the un-definitive <...>
Where beings have their origin there also they cease to exist: offering payment to balance,
one to another, their unbalance for such is the arrangement of what is passing. {10}

An Alternative

In *Notes On War, Suffering, And Personal Judgement* Myatt wrote:

"It is my contention that the wordless knowing which personal empathy provides or can provide together with the wordless knowing arising from a personal pathei-mathos is a moral alternative to the abrogation of personal judgement and of personal conscience required by a nation-State and by established religions in the particular matters of war and the violence involved in supra-personal conflicts where there is an assumed 'us' and a 'them'. A moral alternative because there is a personal, individual, horizon to both empathy and pathei-mathos so that what is beyond this horizon is something we rationally, we humbly, we morally, accept we do not yet know and have not personally experienced and so cannot judge or form a reasonable, a fair, a balanced, opinion about. For empathy and pathei-mathos live within us manifesting the always limited nature, the horizon, of our own knowledge and understanding. That it is a failure to appreciate and understand this which continues the periodical pain, trauma, injury, grief, and death inflicted on individuals."
{7}

Myatt's weltanschauung is certainly an alternative to the causal abstractions that now dominate the world which abstractions cause and have over millennia caused so much suffering.

As to why this weltanschauung has been neglected in academia and elsewhere, it seems that all, except a few, zealously judge him according to certain abstractions which they or others have, based on his past, projected onto to him in the now common belief, manifest in the Zeitgeist of our modern world, that such abstractions define and explain

a person and their past, even though in Myatt's case that now regretted past {11} was the *fons et origo* of his weltanschauung of pathei-mathos with its virtues of empathy, humility, and compassion.

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2024

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{1} qv. Myatt, *The Numinous Way Of Pathei-Mathos*, <https://perceiverations.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/numinous-way-pathei-mathos-v7.pdf>

{2} Myatt, *Research, Primary Sources, And Pathei-Mathos*, 2024, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/myatt-a-neglected-aspect.pdf>

{3} In regard to the fallacy of appeal to authority, qv. the *Primary Sources And Fallacies Of Reasoning* section of Myatt's *Research, Primary Sources, And Pathei-Mathos*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/myatt-a-neglected-aspect.pdf>

{4} *Reflections On Conflict And Suffering*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/conflict-and-suffering-dwmyatt.pdf>

{5} *Religion, Empathy, and Pathei-Mathos*, <https://davidmyatt.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/religion-and-empathy.pdf>

{6} qv. Myatt, *The Gospel Of John*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/gospel-of-john-chapter5-v3a.pdf>

{7} *Empathy And Pathei-Mathos As A Guide in Notes On War, Suffering, And Personal Judgement*, 2024, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/dwmyatt-notes-war-suffering.pdf>

{8} *Lawh al-Zumurrud*, translated, with commentary, by Myatt, qv. *DW Myatt: Greek And Latin Translations*, https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/dwm_translations.pdf

{9} *The Beatitudes*, translated, with commentary, by Myatt, qv. *DW Myatt: Greek And Latin Translations*, op.cit.

{10} *Anaximander*, translated, with commentary, by Myatt, qv. *DW Myatt: Greek And Latin Translations*, op.cit.

{11} qv. (i) *Understanding And Rejecting Extremism*, <https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/david-myatt-rejecting-extremism.pdf> and (ii) *Soli Deo Gloria*, included here as Appendix Two.

Appendix One

In The Real World

The societies of today are dependant on causal abstractions just as many ancient societies were, with abstractions used to classify individuals and judge individuals. Thus in ancient Greece and Rome slavery was accepted by perhaps a majority in a community, as well as considered by the ruling elite as natural and necessary, with human beings assigned to or included in the category 'slave' a commodity who could be traded with slaves regarded as necessary to the functioning of society. Over centuries, with the evolution of religions such as Christianity and with the development in Western societies of humanist weltanschauungen, the moral values of this particular abstraction, this particular category to which certain human beings were assigned, changed such that for perhaps a majority slavery gradually came to be regarded as morally repugnant. Similarly in respect of the abstraction designated in modern times by such terms as "the rôle of women in society" which rôle for millennia in the West was defined according to various criteria mostly deriving from a ruling and an accepted patriarchy but which rôle in the past century in Western societies has gradually been redefined.

We have continued to manufacture causal abstractions and continue to assign individuals to them, as in the abstraction denoted by the term nation-State and which abstraction, with its government, its supra-personal authority, its laws, its economy, its perceived or declared enemies often in the form of another nation-State, and its inclusion/exclusion (citizenship or lack of it) has come to dominate and influence the life of the majority of people in the West.

In the real world, abstractions conceal our connexion to Being and to other living beings so that instead of using wordless empathy and pathei-mathos as a guide to Reality and to living we tend to define ourselves or are defined by others according to an abstraction or according to various abstractions, all of which are defined and/or explained by denotata and thus open to interpretation, involve a dialectic of opposites and all of which lead to or will lead to over durations of causal time to ἔρις, to discord. According to the recounted tales of Greek mythology attributed to Aesop, ἔρις was caused by, or was a consequence of, the marriage between a personified πόλεμος (as the δαίμων of kindred strife) and a personified ὕβρις (as the δαίμων of arrogant pride) with Polemos following Hubris around rather than vice versa, with Eris thus considered the child of Polemos and Hubris.

Appendix Two

Soli Deo Gloria

Being extracts from a letter written in reply
to someone enquiring about the philosophy of The Numinous Way.

Since you enquire about the veracity of my Numinous Way, I should perhaps emphasize – as I have mentioned several times over the past few years – that this Way represents only my own fallible answers born from my own pathemathos, and that I am acutely aware that the answers of many other Ways, such as Buddhism and the answers of conventional religions such as Catholicism, also in their own particular harmonious manner express something of the numinous and may thus for many people provide a guide to living in a more numinous way.

As I wrote many years ago:

The Numinous Way is but one answer to the questions about existence, [and] does not have some monopoly on truth, nor does it claim any prominence, accepting that all the diverse manifestations of the Numen, all the diverse answers, of the various numinous Ways and religions, have or may have their place, and all perhaps may serve the same ultimate purpose – that of bringing us closer to the ineffable beauty, the ineffable goodness, of life; that of transforming us, reminding us; that of giving us as individuals the chance to cease to cause suffering, to presence the good, to be part of the Numen itself. For what distinguishes a valuable, a good, a numinous Way or religion, is firstly this commitment, however expressed, to the cessation of suffering through means which do not cause more suffering; secondly, having some practical means whereby individuals can transform themselves for the better, and thirdly, possessing some way of presenting, manifesting, presencing what is sacred, what is numinous, thus reconnecting the individual to the source of their being, to their humanity.

In my fallible view, any Way or religion which manifests, which expresses, which guides individuals toward, the numinous humility we human beings need is good, and should not be stridently condemned.

For such personal humility – that which prevents us from committing hubris, whatever the *raison d'être*, the theology, the philosophy – is a presencing of the numinous. Indeed, one might write and say that it is a personal humility – whatever the source – that expresses our true developed (that is, rational and empathic) human nature and which nature such Ways or religions or mythological allegories remind us of. Hence the formulae, the expression, *Soli Deo Gloria* being one Western cultural manifestation of a necessary truth, manifesting as it does one particular numinous allegory among many such historical and cultural and mythological allegories. Just as, for example, the sight of King Louis IX walking barefoot to Sainte Chapelle was a symbol of the humility which the Christian faith, correctly understood, sought to cultivate in individuals.

As I mentioned in my essay *Humility, Abstractions, and Belief*,

One of the great advantages – a manifestation of humanity – of a Way such as Islam and Christianity and Buddhism is that they provide, or can provide, us with the supra-personal perspective, and thus the humility, we human beings require to prevent us veering into and becoming subsumed with the error of hubris.

As it says in the Rule of Saint Benedict:

"The peak of our endeavour is to achieve profound humility..." Chapter 7, *The Value of Humility*

As it says in the Quran:

"The *'Ibaad* of Ar-Rahman [Allah] are those who walk on earth in humility." 25:63

As it says in the Dhammapada:

"Yo bâlo maññati bâlyaè paúóitovâpi tena so bâlo ca paúóitamânî sa ve bâloti vuccati."

"Accepting of themselves, the simple person in their simplicity is wise, although if they pride themselves they are wise, they are simply full of pride. "

Furthermore, such Ways provide such a supra-personal perspective in a manner which is living – that is, these Ways are presented to us as something which has a historical genesis and which lives among us, in our own times, in and through those devoted to them in that dignified manner which makes such people living examples of those tenets, of those Ways. That is, the dignified people who follow such Ways – who are inspired by those Ways to practice humility in their own lives – thus manifest the numinous, the sacred, among us, and so can provide us with practical, and personal, guidance, and a sense of belonging.

Thus, I now have, partly from practical experience, come to apprehend a certain unity, a certain common insight, behind many outwardly differing Ways and religious forms, to the extent that I personally have been considered by some people to be some kind of Buddhist-Taoist-Muslim-Sufi-Catholic-NuminousWay-pagan-mystic hybrid. But in truth, I am merely someone who as a result of pathei-mathos knows their limitations, their fallibility, and thus who empathically resonates with past and present emanations of the numinous, often because of struggling to answer certain questions about our human nature, about our mortal existence, and about the nature of Reality which many others over millennia have also sought to answer.

Since you especially ask about Catholicism in relation to the Numinous Way, all I can say in my experience – having been raised a Catholic and having spent some time as a Catholic monk – is that Catholicism did manifest, and to an extent still does manifest, aspects of the numinous and therefore this particular guide to human living is one which I understand and appreciate as one style of earthly-harmony.

As I wrote a year or so ago:

"The Latin Tridentine Mass of the Catholic Church [...] evolved over a certain period of causal time, and became, for many Catholics, the main ritual, or rite, which imbued their ordinary lives with a certain numinosity – a certain awareness of the sacred, with attendance at this rite involving certain customs, such as modest and clean dress, and women covering their heads with a veil. This rite was, in essence, a *Mysterium* – that is, it embodied not only something holy and somewhat mysterious (such as the Consecration and Communion) but also was wordlessly un-mundane and so re-presented to most of those attending the rite, almost another world, with this re-presentation aided by such things as the use of incense, the ringing of the Sanctus bell, and the genuflections. In addition, and importantly, the language of this rite was not that of everyday speech, and was not even, any longer, a living changing language, but rather had in many ways become the sacred language of that particular Way.

The Catholic rite endured for centuries and, indeed, to attend this particular rite marked, affirmed and re-affirmed one as a Catholic, as a particular follower of a particular Way, and a Way quite distinct from the schism that became Protestantism [1], a fact which explained, for instance, the decision, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First of England, to punish by fine or imprisonment those who attended this rite, and to persecute, accuse of treason, and often execute, those who performed this rite.

However, the reforms imposed by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican replaced this numinous rite, this *Mysterium*, with rites and practices redolent of un-numinous Protestantism. Why? Most probably because those involved in such planning and producing and implementing such reforms were swayed by the causal abstractions of "progress" and "relevancy" – desiring as they did and do to be in accord with the causal, material, *Zeitgeist* of the modern West where numbers of adherents, and conformity to trendy ideas and theories, are regarded as more important than presencing The Numen in a numinous manner. When, that is, some profane causal abstractions come to be regarded as more relevant than experiencing and manifesting the sacred as the sacred.

Yet this does not mean that Catholicism, before the reforms imposed by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, was or remained a Way, *per se*. Only that, of all the variants of what are now termed Christianity, it retained a certain numinosity expressed by the original Way; that, through its *Mysteriums* such as the Tridentine Mass, it still presenced something of The Numen; and that it managed to avoid the worst excesses of the religious attitude, maintaining as it did a monasticism which by its own particular way of life encouraged the cultivation of a genuine, non-dogmatic, humility." *Source – Concerning The Nature of Religion and The Nature of The Numinous Way*

As this quote – and the associated footnote – make clear, it is my personal opinion that traditional Catholicism, with its Tridentine Mass and its particular conservative traditions, was a somewhat better, more harmonious, expression of the numinous (a necessary and relevant expression of the numinous), than both Protestantism and the reforms introduced by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, and which reforms served only to undermine the numinous, to untwist the threads that held together its "hidden soul of harmony".

However, what really matters in my view in respect of considering how we judge and evaluate other Ways and other styles of earthly-harmony (that is, what are often regarded as religious expressions of the numinous), is not so much their veracity as perceived and/or assumed by us during one span or certain spans of causal Time, but rather how those Ways, those expressions, affect people and predispose them toward or guide them toward living in a more numinous manner. That is, by criteria such as humility, avoidance of hubris, compassion, fairness toward others: by those things which express, which manifest, the numinous in us, in terms of our character, our behaviour. Not, that is, by some abstract criteria which we posit and which we with arrogance use to condemn or malign, often based on some vainglorious assumption or need that our own beliefs, our own answers, are the correct ones.

There is thus a tolerance, a respect; a desire not to stridently condemn; an awareness of our own fallibility deriving from our own pathei-mathos and from the numinous perspective, the silent wordless clarity, that such a personal learning from the suffering of experience brings.

All I have tried to do in respect of The Numinous Way is present what I hope is an alternative style of earthly-harmony, and sought to clarify how this alternative differs from others. For instance, in the matter of empathy, of honour, and of seeking to avoid the dogma arising from some causal abstraction or other. As to the veracity of my personal answers, I admit I do not know.

David Myatt
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Footnotes:

[1] Catholicism (before the reforms imposed by the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican) represented, in my view, the original Way known as Christianity, and was – at least before those reforms – quite distinct from those schisms which are now known as Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity. Indeed, distinct enough – until those reforms – to be considered a different Way of Life, a Way evident, for example, in Catholic rites (such as the Tridentine Mass), in monasticism, in Papal authority, in the use of Latin, and in the reverence accorded The Blessed Virgin Mary.

Furthermore, it is my view that the schism now termed Protestantism was a classic example of the religious attitude predominating over numinosity – and thus that it is and was redolent of attempts to reduce The Numen to linear causal abstractions. Thus, Mysteriums such as the Tridentine Mass became replaced with recitation of Scripture in the vernacular and with attempts to rationally explain – according to some abstract causal theory – the mystery of the consecration.

Source:

<https://davidmyatt.wordpress.com/2011/06/29/soli-deo-gloria/>

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